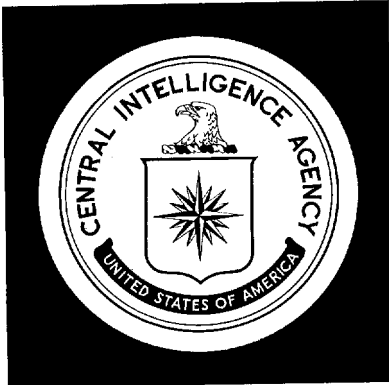


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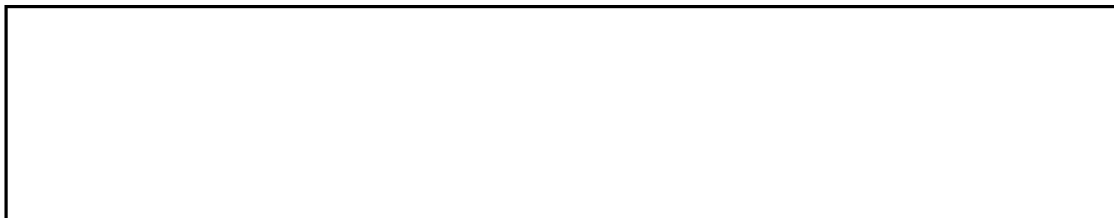
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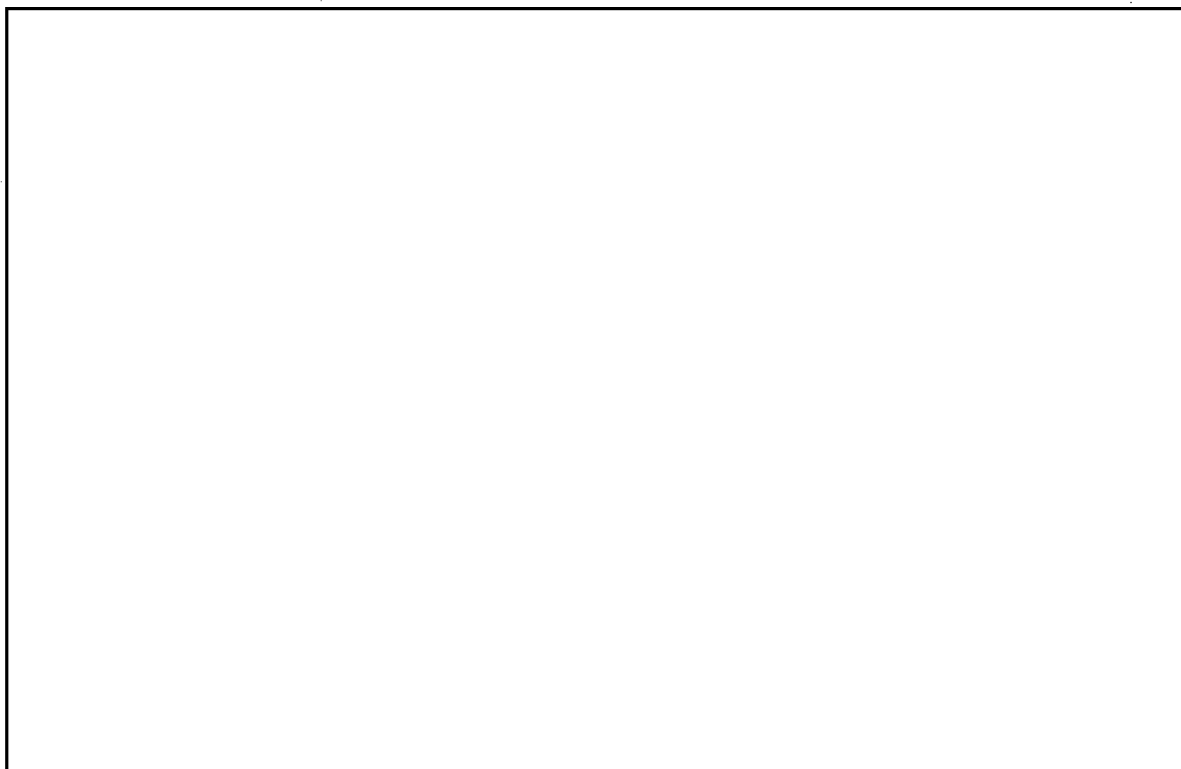
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CONTENTS

25X1



CAMBODIA: Lon Nol appears to be in political trouble. (Page 4)



25X1

25X1

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25X1

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Next 6 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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CAMBODIA: Prime Minister Lon Nol appears to be in political trouble.

Key government officials have now joined civilian critics in blaming Lon Nol for the collapse of the Chenla II operation.

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There is also fresh evidence that there has been a deterioration in Lon Nol's relationship with his "designate," Sirik Matak. Matak may be upset by the fact that contrary to their "understanding," Lon Nol has again assumed the burden of running the government. He may be trying to dissociate himself from what increasingly appears to many in Phnom Penh as a bankrupt leadership.

Any move to oust Lon Nol or move him into an honorific post will need the backing of the military. There is still little information on how the military leaders are reacting to recent reverses, but some will undoubtedly be inclined to blame Lon Nol's excessive control over battlefield tactics as an important contributing factor. Cheng Heng has made vague references to the military's growing disillusionment with Lon Nol and there are continuing reports that some military leaders believe that the prime minister is unrealistically optimistic in his military planning.

As the prime mover behind the Chenla II offensive, it was inevitable that Lon Nol would be blamed for its failure, and that the criticisms which precipitated a political crisis last spring would surface again. The stage is therefore set for another period of political maneuvering in Phnom Penh, but it is still not certain that the disparate elements who are unhappy with Lon Nol can agree on a successor.

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Central Intelligence Bulletin

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Next 6 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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